

CHAPTER 4. GROWTH PROJECTIONS AND LAND USE TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

The growth pressures that accompany population increases and economic expansion inevitably result in the conversion of undeveloped (or underdeveloped) land to more urbanized uses. Cities and counties typically plan for growth in their general plans, in part, by assigning land use designations to all land within their jurisdictions. By doing so, the local government can, to some extent, control the density and intensity of development and direct growth to certain areas while discouraging it in others.

In addition to population increase, job growth, and land use policy, there are other factors that can influence development pressures within an area. The existence of, or plans for, water and wastewater infrastructure, roads and other public facilities are key components of growth. An examination of these factors, along with land availability (e.g., Williamson Act contract status, conservation easements, etc.), can help in projecting where growth pressures are likely to occur.

The purpose of this *Growth Projections and Land Use Trends* report is to create a consolidated snapshot of historical and projected land development patterns in western Placer County. The identified trends in urbanization will then be used to project agricultural land conversion rates and patterns in the western County. The report considers factors discussed above, such as population growth, local growth policies, and availability of infrastructure, within the context of agricultural operations.

The information from this report will be paired with a companion report entitled *Effects of Land Conversion on Agricultural Activity* that evaluates land conversion impacts on agricultural activities, such as parcel fragmentation, conflicts at the agricultural/urban interface, access to transportation routes, and loss of agricultural support services and infrastructure. Conclusions will be drawn from these reports as to the general locations and extent of loss of agricultural resources. Potential high-growth/land conversion areas will be juxtaposed with key agricultural resources to produce an estimate of agricultural productivity loss at plan buildout with losses expressed in terms of agricultural land type (e.g., cultivated, dry pasture, etc.) and potential crop types.

SETTING

Land Use Designations

Each of the five cities in western Placer County, as well as the County, have established broad policies in their general plans that direct how land may be developed within their respective jurisdictions. These general plans, along with eight (8) Placer County community plans (that address unique issues and concerns in specific areas of the western County), assign land use

designations to each parcel. This categorization has the effect of identifying both the types of land uses that could be established (e.g., residential, commercial, agricultural, etc.) and, to some extent, the density of residential development (i.e., number of dwelling units per acre).

Figure 4-1 shows the general land uses, as designated in the general plans (including community plans), as well as the broad range of allowed densities within each residential designation (Placer County Planning Department, 1999). For the purpose of this land use trends analysis, land uses have been aggregated into six (6) general categories: 1) agricultural; 2) rural residential, 3) urban and suburban residential; 4) commercial, industrial, & professional; 5) open space, public recreation & water influence; and 6) special study areas. The approximate corresponding acreages for each land use type are as follows:

Agricultural Agricultural uses make up the single largest land category in the study area—this includes 129,209 acres of cultivated farmland, idle farmland, pasture and semi-agricultural uses. Lands designated for agricultural use represent approximately 42.1 percent of the total acreage in the study area.

Rural Residential Rural residential comprises the second largest category of land use in the western County. With 67,704 acres designated for this purpose, it represents 22.1 percent of the overall area.

Urban and Suburban Residential Urban and suburban residential uses comprise 50,541 or 16.5 percent of the study area. This includes low-density residential (0.1-5.0 du/acre), medium-density residential (5.1-10.0 du/acre), and high-density residential (10.1-20.0+du/acre).

Commercial, Industrial & Professional Commercial, industrial & professional land use designations allow for sale of goods and services, industrial and manufacturing and professional offices. This collective land use comprises 20,688 acres, or 6.7 percent of the overall area.

Open Space, Public, Recreational & Water Influence Open space, public, recreational, and water influence uses include golf courses, recreational areas, and public open spaces. Approximately 29,108 acres of this land use represents 9.5 percent of the overall study area.

Special Study Area The County General Plan designates areas within a city's sphere of influence outside the city limits as "urban reserve study areas." The study areas that are considered in this report are the West Roseville Specific Plan area and Placer Vineyards that comprise 9,407 acres west of the City of Roseville. These areas, which comprise 3.1 percent of the total area, are targeted for future development and will likely require the preparation of a specific plan that determines the land use, circulation and public services requirements for the area proposed for development.

FIGURE 4-1
Land Use Designations

Existing Land Uses

Figure 4-2 shows existing land uses within the study area (Placer County Planning Department, 2000). These uses reflect what presently exists rather than what could be developed under buildout of the general plans. The map of existing land uses provides a baseline for projecting loss of agricultural land.

Using the County's data base to create the Existing Land Use map, calculations show that with approximately 15 percent of land in the western County in urban uses (Placer County Planning Department, 2000), almost 10 percent is cultivated farmland; 8 percent is idle farmland, pasture, or semi-agricultural; and 64 percent considered other "native vegetation. The remainder is riparian or water surface area.

When compared with proposed land uses, as designated under County and cities' general plan buildout, it is possible to approximate both where and how much land has the potential to be converted to other uses. This comparative analysis and discussion in land use trends is provided in Section IV of this report.

POPULATION GROWTH TRENDS

A housing boom, created by new industry and commercial job growth over the past two decades, has turned the once rural areas of south and western Placer County into rapidly expanding communities. While the vast majority of growth has occurred in the cities of Roseville and Rocklin, more recent developments in the City of Lincoln have shown significant increases in population and housing expansion.

Table 4-1 below shows the County's population growth rate by decade. The multiplier effect, as population increases, results in an even greater growth rate overall, however. According to SACOG, the County's 2000 population reached 230,060 people, an increase of 158,000, or 219 percent, since 1967. The majority of the residents live in the cities of Placer County but the unincorporated area continues to have the largest population under a single governmental entity.

TABLE 4-1

**Placer County Population Growth by Decade
1900-1999**

1900- 1909	1910- 1919	1920- 1929	1930- 1939	1940- 1949	1950- 1959	1960- 1969	1970- 1979	1980- 1989	1990- 1999
15.5%	1.9%	31.7%	14.0%	42.3%	32.0%	32.3%	45.3%	38.7%	38.6%
Source: Placer County Agricultural Study – Fall 2000									

FIGURE 4-2
Existing Land Uses

Although increasingly faced with development pressures from the south and west, there remain large tracts of rural residential and agricultural lands in the western County. The populations of Roseville, Rocklin, and Lincoln have steadily increased during this high growth period as they provide new sources of housing and employment in the western County. Placer County Office of Economic Development reports that between 1990 and 1999 the Valley region (west and south of Auburn) was the fastest growing region of Placer County, increasing in population by nearly 60.7 percent (Placer County Office of Economic Development, 2001), compared with 38.6 percent for the County as a whole.

Historical and Projected Population Growth

In 1998, the State Department of Finance (DOF) identified Placer as one of two of the fastest growing counties in the State of California with a four percent annual growth rate. This high growth is projected to continue for years to come. Based on population and employment projections, Placer County's population will more than double in the next 40 years. SACOG projects a 2022 population of 407,500 (excluding the Tahoe Basin). Looking further into the future, DOF has projected that in 2040 Placer County's population will be 522,214 for the same area.

Population growth trends in south and western Placer County are described below. Figures are derived from 2000 Census data, State Department of Finance, and Sacramento Area Council of Governments' (SACOG) 1998 Population and Housing Estimates. The following is a brief summary of historical growth patterns and projections for communities in western Placer County:

Lincoln The City of Lincoln, which historically has been a center for agriculture and clay production, is rapidly transforming into the newest "hot spot" for development in this rapidly expanding region of the County. In 1980, the City's residents totaled 4,130 and increased by 1990 to 7,031. The City cite as 2001 population of 11,500, representing a 178 percent increase in population over the past 21 years (City of Lincoln, 2001). The City anticipates a population of 60,000 at ultimate buildout of the current General Plan. However, Lincoln is in the process of updating its General plan which could result in a greater holding capacity.

Loomis Compared with neighboring municipalities to the south and west, the Town of Loomis, which incorporated in 1984, has experienced considerably less of the building boom. Although increasingly faced with development pressures, the Town continues to hold onto its identity as a rural community, supporting a relatively slow growth rate. The most current population estimates show that the Town has grown by 16 percent to 6,100 residents since 1984 (Loomis General Plan, 2001). Under its recently completed general plan update, the ultimate buildout population could be as much as 10,500, representing a 72 percent increase over the current population.

Rocklin Rocklin has grown at a rapid pace over the past two decades. In 1980, this former mining town's population totaled 7,298. In the last nearly two decades the City has evolved into a modern bedroom community. Having grown 398 percent to 36,330 since 1980, the City predicts a population of 50,000 under buildout of its general plan.

Roseville The City of Roseville, located at the southern edge of Placer County, typifies the phenomenal growth in the South Placer region. The onetime railroad town has rapidly expanded in its industrial, commercial and housing sectors since 1980 when the number of residents totaled 24,347. The City's present household population is 83,002, representing a 241 percent increase over the past 21 years. The City's projections show a population increase of between 105,000 and 110,000 by the year 2010. This does not include the City's intention to annex the West Roseville Specific Plan area which would add approximately 8,200 dwelling units to the 3,100-acre area.

Other Areas Additional unincorporated areas in the south and west regions of Placer County are also experiencing residential growth and are expected to be sources of population increase in the next two decades. State Department of Finance shows Placer County's unincorporated population to be 94,421 as of January 1998. SACOG projects that unincorporated communities such as Granite Bay and North Auburn, as well as the City of Auburn, will continue to experience population expansion through 2020, but at slightly lower rates than the South Placer area.

LAND USE TRENDS

The population doubling expected over the next 40 years translates into a large conversion of existing open space into urban and rural residential developments. The County and cities' general plans have accommodated for this expected growth with approximately 59,000 acres of land designated for new urban land uses (commercial, industrial and residential), bringing the total urban area to 106,066 acres (Placer Legacy database, 2000).

Spheres of Influence and City Boundaries

Figure 4-3 compares city boundaries and spheres of influence, as they were 1987, with the current boundaries (2000). This comparison demonstrates how planned expansion of urbanized areas has increased significantly in the western County over the past decade. The most significant change to city and sphere of influence boundaries has occurred in and around the City of Lincoln where the annexation of Twelve Bridges in 1994 increased the amount of land within Lincoln's jurisdiction by approximately 6,000 acres.

Urban Buildout

Figure 4-4 provides a look at urban buildout expected under the existing general/community plans. The map shows that future urban growth is concentrated mostly in south and west Placer County. As was done in Section II above, the County's data base was used to determine that under a buildout scenario for all cities and the County, slightly more than 43 percent of land in the western County will be converted to urban uses, leaving almost 9 percent in cultivated farmland, 6 percent as idle farmland, pasture, or semi-agricultural, and 40 percent as other "native" vegetation, with riparian or water surface area covering the remaining 2 percent.

FIGURE 4-3
City Boundaries and Spheres of Influence

FIGURE 4-4
Urban Buildout Under Existing General Plans

Historical Land Uses

Agricultural The *Placer County Agricultural Study* reports that agricultural acreage was reduced by 301,086 acres between 1900 and 1997—estimated acreages are shown in *Table 4-2*. A significant decline (91,120 acres) in production occurred between 1959 and 1974, reflecting increased development in the western County. That trend reversed, however, between 1974 and 1982 with a substantial increase in the purchase of rural residential parcels. Their desire to experience a rural lifestyle and engage in small-scale agricultural production resulted in a short-term gain in agricultural acreage during this period (Placer County Agricultural Study, 2000).

Many who started these farms in the late 1970s and early 1980s eventually left agriculture, reducing the acreage from 182,792 in 1982 to 139,597 in 1997, representing a 23.6 percent decrease. The majority of the loss has been grazing lands being replaced by urbanized land uses. The agricultural report states that, if this conversion continues at its present rate of 2.8 percent per year, the replacement will translate into a doubling of urban acreage over the next 50 years (Placer County Agricultural Study, 2000).

TABLE 4-2

**Placer County Land in Agriculture
1900-1997 (acres)**

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1959	1969	1982	1997
440,683	248,336	232,984	350,718	214,784	299,334	258,825	211,439	182,792	139,587
Source: Placer County Agricultural Study – Fall 2000									

Population growth led to fewer agricultural acres which led to a fewer number of farms. The most significant decline was from 1959 to 1974 as the number of farms decreased by 32.9 percent from 1,213 to 813 farms. A resurgence in farm numbers occurred between 1974 and 1982 that increased the number of farms to 1,335.

Rural Much of the land conversion from agricultural uses has been toward less intensified, semi-agricultural uses. This parcelization of farmland has resulted in the creation of numerous rural residential parcels (5-20 acres); these rural parcels are commonly referred to as “hobby farms” since, in most cases, they do not provide the principal source of income for the household. A primary consequence of this shift to fragmentation and less intensified use of agricultural land has been not only the reduction of large-scale farming and ranching operations, but also a change in the community character to a more suburban one.

Urban/Suburban In addition to the cities’ expanded spheres of influence, the County identified, through its 1994 General Plan update process, two presently rural areas as appropriate for urbanized development, if carried out under an approved specific plan; they include the 1,950-acre Bickford Ranch east of Lincoln, and 5,200-acre Placer Vineyards in the southwest corner of unincorporated Placer County. The Bickford Ranch Specific Plan Area

consists of 1,950± acres that could contain up to 1,950 dwelling units and a maximum of 14 acres of commercial uses. A draft specific plan has been submitted to the County for review; it proposes the maximum 1,950 dwelling units, plus an 8-acre commercial village and extensive recreational facilities.

The City of Lincoln's city limits abut most of the cultivated farmland in western Placer County. With the City's annexation of the Twelve Bridges development in 1994, and the recent development of several large housing projects, continued rapid growth is expected to the south and west. The City has approved a public facilities plan that extends through 2010 and would allow for population growth up to 29,000.

With an historically strong job base provided by several large employers in Roseville, this city has experienced rapid population growth and urban development over the past two decades. As of June 2001, approximately 36 percent of the City's developable land is vacant or underdeveloped. It is expected that, as the City continues to grow, this land will be developed with commercial, business/professional, industrial and residential use. Roseville is presently considering the annexation of the West Roseville Specific Plan area; this would add approximately 8,200 dwelling units to the 3,100 acres targeted for urbanization.

AGRICULTURAL LAND UNDER GENERAL PLAN BUILDOUT

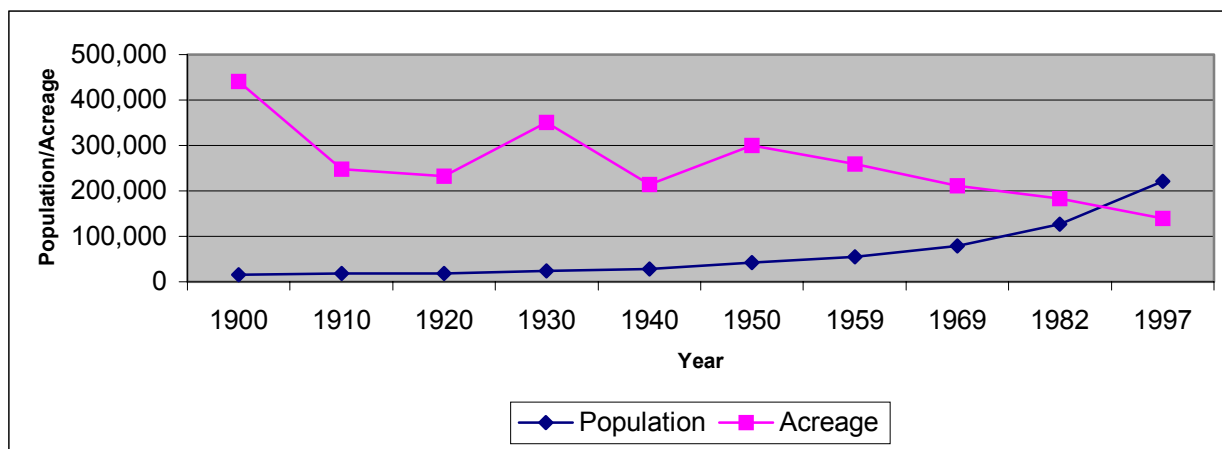
Growth increased development pressure and moved urban residents in closer proximity to agricultural producers. *Table 4-3* below shows the historical trend in land conversion created by population growth between 1900 and 1997, and the effect that this growth has had on agricultural in terms of the number of farms and their size. A corresponding graphic portrayal of population and farmland acreage in *Figure 4-5* shows the relationship of population growth to reduction farmland during the same period.

TABLE 4-3

Impacts of Population Growth on Agricultural Land Uses 1900-1997

Category	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1959	1969	1982	1997
Population	15,786	18,237	18,584	24,468	28,108	41,649	54,900	78,215	126,216	220,580
Farm Acreages	440,683	248,336	232,984	350,718	214,784	299,334	258,825	211,439	182,792	139,597
Average Farm Acreage	409	234	182	215	148	215	213	227	136	140
Farms <50 acres	412	452	616	910	877	1,174	685	520	978	716
Farms 50-179 acres	406	206	267	327	394	429	344	247	225	133
Farms > 179 acres	258	404	397	391	180	210	184	163	132	148
Source: Placer County Agricultural Study – Fall 2000										

FIGURE 4-5
Trends in Population Growth and Agricultural Land Reduction



Comparing available agricultural land under existing conditions (*Figure 4-2*) and general plan buildout (*Figure 4-4*), it is estimated that approximately 91,637 acres of land will likely be converted from agricultural to urban uses; this includes 3,886 acres of cultivated farmland; 6,749 acres of idle farmland, pasture or semi-agricultural uses; and 81,002 acres of other “native” vegetation which mostly serves as pasture land. *Table 4-4* provides a comparison of acreages under current conditions and under general plan buildout.

TABLE 4-4
Conversion of Agricultural Land Under General Plan Buildout

Category	Existing		Under General Plan Buildout	
	Acres	Percentage of Study Area	Acres	Percentage of Study Area
Cultivated	32,264	10%	28,378	9%
Idle Farmland, Pasture, Semi-agriculture	26,405	8%	19,656	6%
Other “Native” Vegetation	210,423	64%	129,421	40%

GROWTH PRESSURES

SACOG has calculated that the collective general plans in Placer County (cities and County) would accommodate approximately 570,000 persons at buildout (post-2040 for residential). However, heavy land speculation in the area has occurred in areas that lie outside the areas designated for new development. Evidence of this speculation is that nearly 50 percent of land

in the western County is owned by non-Placer County residents. *Figure 4-6* provides a look at the growth pressure areas beyond those accounted for in the County and cities' general plans, as discussed in Section IV; specifically the location of 1) proposed transportation corridors; 2) water infrastructure; and 3) Williamson Act non-renewal and expired contracts are shown.

Future Transportation Corridors

The area west of Roseville and Lincoln is particularly affected by speculation, fueled in part by proposed infrastructure improvements (i.e., Placer Parkway and Highway 65 Bypass) that could potentially be growth-inducing. As shown on *Figure 4-6*, the County has delineated approximate 1-2 mile wide corridors for Placer Parkway and Highway 65 Bypass within which potential growth could occur as result of their construction if annexations occurred or if general plan amendments were successfully processed in the County for urban development. Project design, particularly the number of interchanges to allow exit from these roadways, will largely determine the extent to which these infrastructure projects are growth inducing.

Williamson Act Contracts

Another indicator of growth pressure is Placer County's high rate of non-renewed Williamson Act (farmland preservation) contracts, the second highest in the State behind Orange County. Experience shows that landowners often subdivide these properties for development once the contract has expired.

While no land was removed from Williamson Act until after 1980, non-renewal acreage increased 265 percent during the period 1980-1990 with a slight increase in non-renewals between 1991 and 2000. Contract non-renewal and expirations are concentrated in and around cities' spheres of influence and major transportation corridors (discussed earlier in this section). Their proximity to the cities of Lincoln and Roseville, the special study areas, as well as the proposed Placer Parkway and Highway 65 Bypass corridor alternatives, suggest that land speculation has provided some impetus to discontinue Williamson Act contract commitments. A detailed analysis of Williamson Act contract trends in Placer County is contained in Chapter 2.

Water Infrastructure & Supply

Placer County Water Agency (PCWA), the principal water provider to non-agricultural customers in the County, forecasts that it can provide water (treated and raw) to western Placer County based on the assumption that Placer County cities and unincorporated areas will build out under the land use scenarios adopted in their general plans and community plans. Requests for intensified land uses (i.e., general plan amendments) by developers will require that PCWA work with the land use authorities to establish a comprehensive plan for meeting future demand.

The agency is in the process of evaluating several policy directions to accommodate a higher intensity of development than is currently planned. While there are no new plans for new construction of water delivery systems, the extent to which water will be a factor in land conversion to urban uses, beyond what is currently planned, will depend on the Agency's policy direction for supplying water to the western County. Whether the Agency continues

FIGURE 4-6
Growth Pressures Map

1) on a “first-come-first-serve” basis; or 2) provides a fixed allocation of the Agency’s supply to the land use jurisdictions for distribution; or 3) reallocates a portion of its water resources away from raw water uses; or 4) increases the overall water supply through aggressive use of reclaimed water, or increased water efficiency, will partially determine the extent of further urbanization. (Note: an evaluation of water infrastructure and supply in western Placer County is contained in a Chapter 3).

Local Growth Policies and Programs

Placer County General Plan’s *Policy Document* does not contain policies specifically intended to address population change. The *Policy Document*’s policies and programs do address the general effects of future development, however. The *Placer County Countywide General Plan Final EIR* concludes that “the General Plan will accommodate a significant increase in the [unincorporated] population, especially in the...South Placer regional analysis area.” Development of agricultural land is not likely to proceed unconstrained, however, due to the County’s agricultural land conservation programs.

The *Placer Legacy* Program includes the establishment of conservation easements and other forms of farmland preservation. One of the objectives of Placer Legacy is to establish a set of evaluation criteria that can help the County and agricultural landowners identify and prioritize lands that are appropriate for conservation and continued production.

The County’s *Agricultural and Open Space Preserves Program* was established in accordance with the Williamson Act to protect agricultural lands for the continued production of agricultural commodities, and to protect certain other lands devoted to open space uses. This program works in conjunction with the Williamson Act and allows for the establishment of Farmland Security Zones, a program dubbed “Super Williamson Act”, to enable contracts with the County for 20-year increments and an additional 35 percent tax benefit over and above the standard 10-year Williamson Act contract.

These County programs may serve as incentives for the conservation of agricultural land, avoiding its premature conversion to non-agricultural uses—particularly those lands that are not expected to be developed under the current general plans.

CONCLUSIONS

Growth pressures resulting from population increase, general plan buildout scenarios and other proposed land uses are likely to result in the conversion of significant acreage from agricultural to urbanized and rural residential uses. The companion report entitled *Effects of Land Conversion on Agricultural Activity* considers this trend in urbanization to examine the qualitative impacts of agricultural land conversion on remaining farms and ranches in western Placer County. It also includes recommendations that may serve to mitigate these impacts.